

REMARKS

In view of the above amendments and the following remarks, reconsideration of the rejections contained in the Office Action of October 19, 2000, is respectfully requested.

In order to make necessary editorial corrections, the entire specification and abstract have been reviewed and revised. As the revisions are quite extensive, the amendments to the specification and abstract have been incorporated into the attached substitute specification and abstract. For the Examiner's convenience, a copy of the marked-up original specification and abstract is also enclosed, and the marked-up pages are captioned "Version of Specification and Abstract with markings to show changes made". The substitute specification and abstract includes the same changes as are indicated in the marked-up copy of the original specification. No new matter has been added by the revisions. Entry of the substitute specification is thus respectfully requested.

The Examiner objected to the drawings because the drawings failed to show element 10 in Figure 5 as described in the specification. In view of this objection, a letter re proposed drawing amendments has been submitted herewith which includes a proposed amendment to Figure 5. This proposed amendment clearly shows element 10, indicating the mounting tab in Figure 5. Consequently, it is respectfully submitted that the Examiner's objection to Figure 5 has been overcome.

On pages 2 and 3 of the Office Action, the Examiner has rejected claims 1-7 and 10-14 as being unpatentable over Hagopian in view of Dameron, and has rejected claims 8, 9 and 15-17 as being unpatentable over Hagopian in view of Dameron. As indicated above, however, original claims 1-17 have been cancelled and replaced with new claims 18-37. These new claims have been drafted so as to place the original claims in a preferred form by reorganizing the limitations and by making minor grammatical corrections. However, the scope of the original claims has not been narrowed. Therefore, for the reasons discussed below, the Examiner's prior art rejections are respectfully traversed.

New independent claims 18, 24 and 28 are all directed to an exterior sheathing element that comprises a first edge portion between lateral sides of a main body, a second edge portion between lateral sides of the main body and opposite the first edge portion, and a mounting tab that *projects*

from the second end portion so as to be substantially co-planar with respect to the main body. Each of the first edge portion and the second edge portion includes a channel which is used to connect adjacent sheathing elements when the sheathing elements are mounted onto a support structure.

The present invention provides an extremely simplified sheathing element which can be installed by an untrained layman. Specifically, the channels of the first edge portion and the second edge portion enable adjacent sheathing elements to be connected in both a side-to-side manner and a top-to-bottom manner. Furthermore, the mounting tab which *projects* from the second end portion of the sheathing element and which is substantially *co-planar* with respect to the main body allows the sheathing elements to be easily and accurately attached to the support structure.

 The Examiner asserts that the Hagopian reference discloses a slot (a mounting slot) for receiving a fastener 24 as shown in Figure 3 so that the sheathing element can be attached to the support structure. However, the Hagopian reference does not disclose a mounting tab that projects from one of the end portions so as to be substantially *co-planar* with respect to the main body. In contrast, the arrangement shown in the Hagopian reference relies on a fastener 24 inserted through the slot 22 to attach the sheathing element to a support structure and also to press the second leg 42 and member 44 against the inverted terminal portion 50 of an adjacent sheathing element in order to connect the two sheathing elements. Thus, this structure is much more complicated to install than that of the present invention. The sheathing elements of the present invention, on the other hand, can be mounted by simply engaging the first edge portion and the second edge portion of adjacent sheathing elements, respectively, and then attaching the adjacent sheathing elements to the support structure by using the mounting tab which projects from the second end portion. Thus, this simplified construction enables a layman to install the sheathing elements.

 The Dameron reference also does not disclose or suggest a mounting tab projecting from a second end portion so as to be substantially *co-planar* with respect to the main body of the sheathing element. Therefore, one of ordinary skill in the art would not have been motivated to modify the Hagopian reference or to combine the references in a manner that would result in the invention of independent claims 18, 24 and 28. Accordingly, it is respectfully submitted that independent claims

18, 24 and 28, and the claims that depend therefrom, are clearly patentable over the prior art of record.

In view of the above amendments and remarks, it is submitted that the present application is now in condition for allowance, and the Examiner is requested to pass the case to issue. If the Examiner should have any comments or suggestions to help speed the prosecution of this application, the Examiner is requested to contact the Applicant's undersigned representative.

Respectfully submitted,

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